

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Child Flu Death Reported to DHHS

Nebraska experiencing heavy flu season – Not too late to be vaccinated

Note: Sound bites on this topic will be available shortly at: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio/>

Lincoln – A child from Lancaster County died from the flu. This is the second flu death so far this season. The first was a man in his 60s, also from Lancaster County. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department reported both deaths to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

"While most children and adults recover from the flu, this is a sad reminder of how serious it can be," says Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "Unfortunately, it's not unusual for there to be some child deaths during a normal flu season, but they have been extremely rare in Nebraska. We offer our condolences to both families."

Children can be more susceptible to flu complications. Nationally, 18 children have died from flu this season, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vaccination is one of the best ways to protect children from the flu.

The CDC recommends flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older.

While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications, and it's extremely important they receive vaccine:

- Young children under 5 years old
- Older people
- People with chronic lung disease (like asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions and certain other long-term health conditions
- Pregnant women

State health officials say it's not too late to get the flu vaccine.

Flu activity continues to be widespread across Nebraska and hasn't peaked yet. Flu arrived in October, a little earlier than usual and it's shaping up to be a heavy flu season. Surveillance data shows more flu circulating now than this time last year.

Here are some additional flu prevention tips:

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home from work, family gatherings and social functions if you're sick
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough with a tissue or sleeve, not your hands
- Eat healthy and get plenty of rest
- Don't smoke

For more flu information, visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/flu.